

Book Review

Grise-Owens, E., Miller, J., & Eaves, M. (Eds.). (2016). *The A-to-Z self-care handbook for social workers and other helping professionals*. Harrisburg, PA: The New Social Worker Press.

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This small text is devoted to helping the professional social worker and any other helping professional. It is the product of the editors' MSW programs' efforts to teach self-care to the students as a professional practice skill. It meets a growing demand for more articles on self-care.

The book is only four chapters, with appendices. The first two chapters introduce the concept in the social worker setting, provide an overview, and then explain how to use the self-care plan. The third chapter is a collection of 26 (A-Z) entries each titled with the corresponding letter of the alphabet. These are short essays (4-5 pages each); each has a Reflection/Discussion section and a Selected Resources section at the end.

The real gem in this book is that the 26 essays are from different authors, with different voices, different views, and with vastly different experiences. The different topics of each essay, with their divergent insights, make a single text broadly representative of many issues and provide rich advice on self-care. "Self-care as a practice skill is as essential and basic as learning your ABCs." (p 21.)

The intent is for the book to be read and used in whatever manner makes it most helpful: straight through, visiting specific topics, read alone or used and discussed by groups, used as staff development, etc. In this respect, the book is a very concise resource that can be used in varied ways for beginners and seasoned practitioners alike.

The primary message is that self-care should be understood to be a core competency, and as such, the editors "...have found that using a specific, structured, self-care plan is essential for ensuring intentional attention to self-care" (p. 19). Self-Care Planning Forms are located at the end of the book: one blank, the other filled out as an example. The authors use the acronym SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-limited) and advocate SMART planning to ensure self-care goals are "attainable and measurable." Lastly, accountability measures are emphasized to include using accountability partners or groups in self-care planning.

For the purpose of reflection and providing self-care direction, this collection of short essays written by social workers and inclusion of a self-care plan outline does what it sets out to do. Awareness, Balance, Connection (just to name the A, B, and C), the titles, and the works themselves create a purposeful and probably much-needed pause. They call attention to the needs of the practitioners themselves with the aim of promoting individual—and thus overall—organizational wellness. For those concerned with "burnout," this is both timely and essential.

"After all, what do we do for a living? We help others to take better care of themselves. To do this well and without impairment, we have to take care of ourselves" (p. 9).