Embrace ‘Self-Care is not Selfish; Self-care is Professional Development’

Many assert they do not have time for professional development. Yet, ‘Self-care is not selfish; self-care is professional development’.¹ This quote, attributed to Danna Thomas, creator of the Happy Teacher Revolution, a program built for primary educators, really changed my perspective on self-care.

Self-Care in basic terms is taking care of oneself. To me, society has painted a picture of self-care only consisting of bubble baths and face masks. Although those are certainly ways to relax, there are so many more components to self-care. Here, I explain why I agree professional development is a form of self-care.

Individuals who make the time for professional development show they prioritize themselves in wanting to improve in various aspects of their lives, especially within their careers! The Talent Development team espouses, it only takes one hour of a 40-hour

workweek to begin a journey towards professional development and growth, and more importantly, self-care.

**Self-Development/Professional Growth**

Self-care includes taking the time to enhance professional skills and improve knowledge. A journey towards professional development and growth can help achieve new-found aspirations and goals. Before exploring external views regarding trends or hot training topics, first engage in self-exploration / self-reflection to learn and understand opportunities for increased knowledge and individual improvement.

**Self-Exploration/Self-Reflection**

Take the time to consider areas of interest to learn, future goals to achieve, and new ways to approach career planning. Reflect on past development and ponder opportunities for new or further education and development. Life is about continuous learning! In school, we learn about many subjects including history, science, writing, languages, etc. Who says learning must stop with a diploma or degree, or several degrees? Set a goal to take one class or workshop this month, or even view one-hour of online training each week. Once initial goals are achieved, develop a drive to achieve more goals, personally and professionally.

The more individuals learn, the more they can share with others. Quoted from a popular television show, “a true teacher never misses the opportunity to learn.” In our professional environments, there are many moments, situations, and experiences for faculty and staff to draw from and apply in their classrooms or work environments. Once
people take the time to focus on their individual growth within the workplace, it impacts the overall job culture. Others may be inspired and begin their own journey of professional development.

**Self-Efficacy/Self-fulfilling Prophecy and Intrinsic Rewards**

Remain positive and do not doubt self-achievement. Self-efficacy can be defined as “a person’s belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation.”^2^ Many, including myself, believe that individuals can do anything they set their minds to, which includes professional development goals. A quote often attributed to Henry Ford states, “whether you think you can or think you can’t, you’re right.” Thus, individuals who think they do not have enough time during their hectic work week to practice self-care through professional development, are most likely correct, because they believe it to be so!

Further, “self-fulfilling prophecy is a sociological term used to describe a prediction that causes itself to become true.”^3^ This goes hand in hand with self-efficacy because individuals can cause the predictions, they have about themselves to become

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true, whether positive or negative. Set positive expectations for achieving professional development goals, believe in those expectations, and achieve the goals predicted.

Intrinsic rewards are the internal gratification individuals give themselves when they make themselves proud. Engage in positive self-efficacy and self-fulfilling prophecies. Individuals who create goals for themselves, expect to succeed with those goals, then set off to achieve them, can expect to feel those intrinsic rewards. Set time aside for self-improvement through professional development, and follow through with it to feel rewarded, fulfilled, and proud of this accomplishment. Self-confidence and other benefits to the community soon follow.

**Self-Confidence/Contributions to the Community**

Everyone should invest in professional development! Faculty and staff can apply their newly found knowledge to their work and even share what they have learned with their students, colleagues, and coworkers. Demonstrating new skills, providing knowledge to others, even sharing professional development experiences with colleagues and coworkers support productive work relationships and can inspire others to engage in this form of self-care as well. We have all heard the saying, actions speak louder than words. People notice when individuals take the time to work on themselves, as their inner work soon shines outwards. Be the light for others to begin their own professional development journeys.
Self-Start with Talent Development Resources

Visit the Talent Development Team’s website and www.training.vt.edu to take advantage of the variety of resources and professional development opportunities offered at Virginia Tech. Start today with a visit to the Virtual Learning Center for resources on learning, leading, and working in any environment!

Author’s Blurb

Isabel Baba is a graduating senior who will be getting a dual degree in Entrepreneurship, Innovation, & Technology Management and Marketing with a concentration in Digital Marketing Strategy in May 2021. She has gotten ample experience within her four years at Virginia Tech, and she recognizes and embraces the importance of professional development. She enjoyed serving as a Pamplin Intern with the Division of Human Resources’ Talent Development Team Spring Semester 2021.

Article Sources

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