

An Academic's Ethical Obligations for Self-care

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ABSTRACT: Academics have experienced increased stress in recent decades due to changing workplace demands. Chronic levels of high stress can lead to poor psychological, physical, productivity, and relational outcomes. While academics have ethical guidelines for research, there is no overarching set of ethical guidelines for other aspects of academic responsibility. We argue that many of the ethical guidelines for psychologists can guide academics in ensuring appropriate self-care choices. Self-care requires ongoing practices—such as boundary setting and prioritizing of career and personal goals, as well as practices for states of extreme stress—such as utilizing an ethical decision-making process. Institutions also have a critical role in supporting academics to engage in self-care practices.

Keywords: academics, self-care, ethics, stress, burnout

RESUMÉ: Les universitaires ressentent depuis quelques décennies un taux de stress élevé à cause des exigences changeants du milieu de travail. Les niveaux de stress chronique peuvent donner des résultats négatifs dans les domaines de santé mentale et physique, productivité et relations interpersonnelles. Bien qu'il existe des directives éthiques pour la recherche, il n'y en a pas pour d'autres aspects de la responsabilité académique. Nous constatons que les directives éthiques conçues pour les psychologues peuvent guider les universitaires à s'assurer de faire de bons choix pour les soins personnels. Les soins personnels exigent des pratiques continues, telles que l'établissement des limites et la priorisation des buts professionnels et personnels ainsi que des pratiques pour combattre des états de stress extrême, telles que l'emploi d'un processus éthique de prise de décision. Les institutions doivent également contribuer au soutien des universitaires dans leur pratiques de soins personnels.

Mots clés : les universitaires, les soins personnels, l'éthique le stress, l'épuisement professionnel

Academic positions have historically been viewed as protected, low-stress careers affording the opportunity to engage deeply in areas of passionate interest and enjoy employment stability thanks to the privileges afforded by tenure. Most academics enter the field because they are intrinsically motivated by their personal interest to disseminate research and share their knowledge with students. Flexibility and independence is one benefit of a career in the academy. Academics are not required to check-in for an eight-to-five job and have license to pursue areas of interest at their own discretion. This passion, in addition to changing demands, can lead to blurring the lines between personal and professional identity (Shaw & Ward, 2014), and it can become easy to invest more hours than a typical work week at the job (Slišković & Maslić Seršić, 2011). Academics are constantly faced with decisions about when, and how, to create boundaries between work and personal life.

While academic positions have historically been viewed as protected, low-stress professions, this career path has changed in recent decades due to policy changes, greater connections to industry, increased workload, and budget cuts to post-secondary institutions (Dunn, Whelton, & Sharpe, 2006; Kinman, 2014; Slišković & Maslić Seršić, 2011; Winefield et al., 2003). Academics are increasingly talking about problems with workload creep whereby their roles and responsibilities are continuously increasing (Williams-June, 2009). Academics are expected to procure increased research funding and multiply their publications while simultaneously managing larger teaching loads. Further, class sizes have increased concurrently with greater diversity and learning needs while faculty members also have to learn new technology related to teaching (Kinman, 2014, 2016). As a result, academics are at risk of having nothing left to give to their students and community.

This paper outlines current research on the impact stress has on academics' well-being and productivity. We make a case that maintaining self-care is an ethical obligation for academics and highlight the responsibility of academics to society, others, and themselves. We also discuss the potential consequences of not maintaining self-care on our personal well-being, the health of our profession, and the well-being of the students we mentor. We will conclude with recommendations for maintaining self-care and ethical decision-making regarding self-care.

Impact of Stress in the Academy

Moderate levels of stress can benefit academic life because it leads to increased creativity, problem-solving, and job satisfaction. In fact, too little stress can have negative outcomes such as boredom, fatigue, and dissatisfaction (Gmelch, 1993). Balance is the key. While many academics find their work rewarding, feel pride in their institution, and are satisfied with their salaries (Parr, 2014), they also provide several reasons that their jobs are stressful. Technology, including laptop computers, tablets, and smart phones, blurs the boundaries between work and private life, increasing expectations to work in the evenings and on the weekends and to be immediately accessible at all times (Slišković & Maslić Seršić, 2011). While technology affords greater flexibility in our jobs, it also makes it difficult to disconnect from the demands of the academy. This inability to disconnect from work leads to feelings of mediocrity in achieving both career and personal goals (Connelly & Ghodsee, 2011) as academics are compelled to continually engage in work that can be done anywhere and is never completely done (Kinman, 2014). Other sources of stress for academics include dissatisfaction with university leadership, job insecurity, workplace bullying, and a perception that their voices are not heeded (Parr, 2014). Students are another source of stress as instructors experience a tension between upholding quality education for students who increasingly see themselves as consumers of a product who can provide negative evaluations on performance ratings (Slišković & Maslić Seršić, 2011).

With increased research, teaching, and service demands, academics are experiencing difficulty maintaining a work-life balance. Consequently, Slišković and Maslić Seršić (2011) found that more than three quarters of academics reported working more than 40 hours per week, and almost 40% reported working more than 50 hours per week. In another survey, 86% of academics reported working more than their contracted hours with 63% saying that they work too much (Parr, 2014). The high number of hours worked per week contributed to work-life conflict and predicted psychological distress and job dissatisfaction.

Psychological and Physical Consequences. Not surprisingly, the more hours per week academic staff work, the more stress and psychological symptoms they report (Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper, & Ricketts, 2005). The ironic combination of high social demands through interactions with students and isolation from colleagues also increases the risk of burnout (Mojsa-Kaja, Golonka, & Marek,

2015), which includes feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). About one third of academics reported that the stress of their jobs negatively impacted their health (Parr, 2014), and about one quarter of Canadian academics reported increased physical symptoms (e.g., headaches) due to work-related stress (Canto et al., 2010). Since the late 90s, there appears to be on an upward trend with the number of academics reporting workplace related stress, lower levels of well-being (Kinman, 2014), and higher levels of psychological distress (Winefield, et al., 2003) compared with other university employees. This research calls for recognition of the stressors related to the changing post-secondary work environment.

Individuals perceive stress differently, contributing to differential reactions to it. Research has found that poor mental health may be caused by an interaction between the work demands and an individual's approach to work. Kinman (2016) found that academics who described their as work requiring significant effort were more likely to also report poor mental health. Kinman also found that over commitment was a risk factor for lack of well-being that exacerbated the negative effects of high effort/low reward working conditions. As academics tend to be highly committed to their field generally and their research specifically, this connection is unsurprising. Another study found that academics with high levels of perfectionism experienced greater levels of psychological distress, which was mediated by hassles and avoidant coping (Dunn et al., 2006).

Productivity Consequences. Several studies examined the relationship between productivity and the number of hours worked. Although they did not specifically target academics, these studies highlight the consequences excessive working hours can have on productivity. To illustrate, a large Australian study found that, for individuals over the age of 40, working excessive hours was related to a decrease in cognitive functioning (i.e., word reading and working memory tasks; Kajitani, McKenzie, & Sakata, 2016). It is not unreasonable to infer that impaired word reading and working memory capacity is likely to reduce faculty productivity considering the demands related to both teaching and research. Another study examined historical data of British female munitions workers' productivity during World War I (Pencavel, 2014), finding decreased productivity and increased injury with excessive hours worked, especially without a day of rest.

Professional and Relational Consequences. In addition to harming oneself and productivity, lack of adequate self-care can

also harm our students and our relationships with our colleagues and students (Morganson, Litano, & O'Neill, 2014). Excessive stress can lead to mental and physical burnout that can, in turn, lead to behaviours that are unbecoming of faculty including emotional detachment and incivility (Kinman, 2014). While intellectual disagreement is an integral and healthy component of a thriving academic community, incivility is detrimental to both the individual and the community. High levels of stress increases rates of uncivil behaviours between academics (e.g., gossip, threats, taking credit for others' work), which further increases stress (Clark, Olender, Kenski, & Cardoni, 2013). Berg and Seeber (2016) suggested that faculty are also less likely to attend to student stress and needs when they are focused on covering needed material and moving on to the next pressing task. Further, a study examining high school teacher–student interaction found that teacher burnout was related to decreased student motivation (Shen et al., 2015), illustrating the impact on student engagement as well. Student incivility has also increased in recent decades demonstrated by using cell phones and social media in class, arriving to class late or leaving early, and conversing loudly with others while the instructor is speaking. Morrisette (2001) suggests that modeling civil behaviours for students (e.g., speaking with rather than at students, teaching students how to respectfully disagree) is an effective strategy to increase the civility of student behaviours while maintaining professional standards of behaviour. It is unlikely that faculty can regularly and effectively utilize these strategies if they are not taking care of their own well-being.

Academics' behaviours and stated positions on self-care impact students' views of the profession. An article in *The Guardian* described the impact of increasing mental health problems in the academy and included stories of how faculty members vaunted failed marriages as proof of their dedication to research (Shaw & Ward, 2014). Some noted the shame they felt for wanting to pursue personal goals such as starting a family as it was viewed as failing to give adequate homage and dedication to research (Warner, 2008). Additionally, female academics with children invest about 10 hours more per week on childcare obligations than their male counterparts (McCutcheon & Morrison, 2016) and younger women academics face higher levels of incivility in the classroom than other groups (Knepp, 2012), highlighting the differing values and challenges that can affect both stress level and decision-making processes.

Supervisors tend to mentor supervisees as they were mentored and base the success of the mentoring relationship on

how well students adopt the supervisor's perspective of academia and professional identity (Brooks, 2001; Hall & Burns, 2009). Unfortunately, the current state of practice often teaches university students that self-care is immoral in that there is a suggestion of prioritizing oneself over others. Consequently, students believe they are required to work at the expense of their well-being in order to succeed (Irvine, 2009). Even in instances in which programs and faculty explicitly promote self-care, students implicitly learn, through observing faculty members' behaviours, that self-care is not valued (Irvine, 2009). The examples set by faculty of how to approach the stressors of academia and how to prioritize time, teach students, who will be future professionals, what it means to be an academic. Given the consequences of burnout and stress on academics' psychological and physical well-being as well as the consequences for students, self-care should be a priority at our universities. The next section defines self-care and outlines the obligations of individuals and institutions to promote a healthy workplace.

Obligations of Self-care

Self-care is described as the application of a range of activities with the goal being "well-functioning," which is described as "the enduring quality in one's professional functioning over time and in the face of professional and personal stressors" (Coster & Schwebel, 1997, p. 5). It is important to engage in regular, restorative self-care activities as well as to monitor ourselves in order to take special effort in applying self-care during times of crisis whether personal or professional (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016).

Leaders (e.g., administrators, deans, department heads) arguably have a role and interest in promoting well-being at universities. In recent years, we have seen some positive initiatives at the institutional level. For example, at the International Conference on Health Promoting Universities & Colleges (2015), representatives from around the world, including Canadian leaders, signed the *Okanagan Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges*. One of the mandates was to embed health into all aspects of university life, operations, and administration. As a result, Canadian institutes are actively developing mental health strategies (University of Calgary, 2015; University of Manitoba, 2016).

In a world where some people identify themselves as "recovering academics," we, as faculty, have an obligation to practice self-care for our personal well-being, the health of our

profession, and the well-being of the students we mentor. However, there is a paucity of literature examining how academics can determine when they need to engage in additional self-care or how to make good decisions when faced with apparent dilemmas. To engage in activities that promote wellness, individuals must be aware that there is a problem. Second, there is a decision-making process that determines whether an academic will take the time (which is often seen in short supply) to engage in self-care.

As researchers, academics follow ethical standards with the core principles of Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice (Canadian Institutes of Health Research [CIHR], Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada [NSERC], & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [SSHRC], 2010), yet there are no universal standards for the rest of our academic practice. A number of researchers have suggested that academics have an ethical obligation to slow down to take time for both self and others (Barnett & Cooper, 2009; Parkins & Craig, 2006; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison (2016) asserted that self-care is an ethical obligation and a requirement to be a resilient practitioner and that this obligation extends to all helping professions including instructors and faculty and not just typical therapeutic professions (e.g., psychologists, counselors, chaplains, etc.); if we do not care effectively for ourselves we are in danger of not being able to fulfill our professional obligations. They describe this obligation in the context of other professions that need to care for themselves in some way in order to effectively perform their jobs (e.g., singers, athletes, etc.)

Ethical Decision-Making and Self-care

As a profession, psychologists follow a set of ethical principles to maintain public safety. While academics as a whole are not mandated to follow a code of ethics the way psychologists are, we argue that academics have implied obligations in several of the areas addressed in the code. The *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* is based on four ethical principles: Respect for the Dignity of Persons, Responsible Caring, Integrity in Relationships, and Responsibility to Society (Canadian Psychological Association, 2000).

The principle, Respect for the Dignity of Persons, holds the “belief that each person should be treated primarily as a person or an end in him/herself, not as an object or a means to an end” (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001, p.34). In the academy, we should respect our colleagues, students, and research participants with whom the faculty member is in contact. The ethical obligations for

research also specifically address this responsibility in relationship to our research (CIHR, NSERC, & SSHRC, 2010). In addition to general respect (e.g., not engaging in degrading comments about others), educators should practice non-discrimination and fair-treatment in their professional relationships. Unfortunately, faculty members report that incivility from both other faculty members (Clark et al., 2013; Kinman, 2014) and students (Knepp, 2012) contributes to high levels of stress, suggesting that we need to more intentionally address incivility in our work.

The second principle, Responsible Caring, holds that “psychologists demonstrate an active concern for the welfare of any individual, family, group, or community with whom they relate in their role as psychologists” (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001, p.57). Responsible caring includes maintaining competence and self-knowledge. Instructors support the well-being of their students by providing quality education and supporting the development of professional and research skills. Faculty are also required to protect their personal well-being in everyday practice and by evaluating the current state of various aspects of their functioning to ensure that these factors are not harming others (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001). It also requires seeking help or discontinuing activities if a physical or psychological condition interferes with one’s performance, highlighting the need to engage in self-care activities to prevent burnout. Responsible Caring is relevant to the self-care of academics who should engage in self-reflection, participate in self-care strategies, and seek assistance when necessary in order to effectively and ethically engage in teaching, research, and service activities.

The third principle, Integrity in Relationships, recognizes the need for relationships based on accuracy, honesty, straightforwardness, and openness. Like the second principle, it emphasizes the need to acknowledge how personal values and self-interest affect decisions. Attending to this principle reduces incivility and increases healthy relationships with colleagues and students. It grapples with the tension between supporting colleagues’ and students’ professional and academic development while ensuring that we prioritize our own well-being so that we can have integrity in our faculty–faculty and faculty–student relationships.

Lastly, the fourth principle, Responsibility to Society, acknowledges that psychologists function within society, which is clearly applicable to academics. Universities are funded by the public, and, consequently, faculty have a responsibility to maintain quality education and to produce worthy research for the benefit of

the public. Inadequate self-care impedes academics' ability to maintain this standard of practice.

Poor self-care can lead to ethical breaches in these four principle areas. For instance, psychotherapists who work with patients diagnosed with a chronic illness have been found to neglect their own self-care leading to compassion fatigue and a violation of their duty to engage in responsible caring (Figley, 2002). As Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison (2016) noted, faculty are engaged in a helping profession and are exposed to similar challenges with compassion fatigue. Faculty who ignore their self-care are more likely to damage relationships with others if stress leads to acts of incivility (Clark et al., 2013). Further, it is likely that poor self-care will result in poor work quality and quantity in both teaching and research due to the high cognitive demands of those tasks (Kajitani et al., 2016; Pencavel, 2014).

Guidelines for Self-care in Academia

Effective self-care requires a full repertoire of principles and strategies employed both regularly and as needed rather than a set formula of activities or coping strategies. The common recommendations to eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep, while sound advice, are often not helpful. Most academics already know that those are healthy goals, but they struggle to know how to make them happen. Effective self-care also requires both individual effort and institutional policies and cultures that promote and support self-care activities as it is challenging to prioritize self-care if the institutional culture does not prioritize it.

Ongoing Self-care. In considering how to achieve the elusive state of work-life balance, Gmelch (1993) suggests that it must start with acknowledging the fact that we each have a limited account of time and energy from which to pull. As a result, we cannot give time to one side (work/personal life) without taking it from the other side as personal and professional demands vie for the same time and energy resources. When urgent tasks usurp the time we intended to spend on the important tasks, it increases our experience of time poverty and feelings of stress. He suggests that we create a list of goals for both professional and personal life in order to prioritize, balance, and review them regularly, adjusting them before they veer too far from our plan. Until we recognize that our investment of extra time in work activities takes time intended for personal demands, we are not likely to set limits on work demands, and they will continue to impinge upon our

personal lives and our well-being, preventing us from treating our self-care as sacred (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016).

Intentionally scheduling self-care as part of our daily activities is a necessary strategy for many in our over-scheduled society because tasks that are not scheduled tend not to be completed. Gmelch (1990, p. 60) provided examples of small actions academics can take to engage in daily self-care: Intentionally schedule time for idleness and unstructured leisure time. Take the time to listen to others without interrupting. Seek out humour. Seek out activities that you find enriching. Compartmentalize more to create times when work is not permitted to creep into your personal time. Know the things that cause you stress so that you can proactively work to ensure that they do not interfere with well-being. It is important to acknowledge that these suggestions are deceptive in their simplicity as putting limits on work often feels “wrong”; however, if we do not manage our own time, others will (Gmelch, 1993), which is another cause of stress for academics.

Stressors such as external expectations, limited time, workload, and meetings are unavoidable, so learning to control stressors through our perceptions and responses rather than attempting to avoid them tends to be a more effective strategy (Gmelch, 1993). Specific to managing work demands, Gmelch (1993) suggested several specific approaches to managing the stress of academia. First, set clear realistic goals with the understanding that most can only achieve excellence in one area and competence in others. This is closely related to the idea of being “good enough” rather than being perfect or the best (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). As noted earlier, the work is never done for academics, so it is important to set realistic expectations on when work quality and quantity is good enough to avoid endless, guilt-ridden work that leads to exhaustion. Focusing on small, professional successes rather than only aiming for big wins (e.g., large grant, tenure, and promotion) can support this (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Second, acknowledge the reality of time constraints by prioritizing tasks with high payoffs and minimizing interruptions. Third, focus efforts on faculty and departmental activities that will make a difference to you and your work. Fourth, consider your aspirations and what you can accomplish; faculty whose productivity is close to their aspirations tend to feel less stress than those with a large difference, regardless of actual productivity levels. Fifth, develop strong negotiation skills to improve student interactions. Finally, cultivate social supports at work to manage the institutional challenges that are not

easy to change (Berg & Seeber, 2016) and to provide a venue for professional venting (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison; 2016) in order to work through stressful situations and get perspective.

Highlighting the role of perception in academics' view of stress, Gmelch (1993) noted six filters through which individuals view situations that impact how stressful it feels. These filters include 1) time (whether or not there is time to slow down and consider best options), 2) level of control over the situation's duration and intensity, 3) level of importance, 4) quality of available information, 5) level of experience with similar situations, and 6) temperament. Attending to the areas we can control and modifying our view of the ones we cannot, when possible, can help to minimize the impact of daily stressors. This is helpful in that multiple stressors within a short period of time can work synergistically to exponentially increase stress, especially when the stressors are related to personal expectations for performance.

Problem-Solving Process for Critical Self-care. Sometimes, psychologists and academics encounter situations that required problem-solving and careful consideration of the principles either due to the nature of the specific question or to the accumulation of stressors that have not been adequately mitigated by preventative self-care. The Canadian Psychological Association outlined an ethical decision-making process to assist psychologists who encounter an ethical dilemma (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001). Academics may find it helpful to apply this process to situations when faced with competing interests as well as for day-to-day decision-making.

Imagine for a moment that you have been asked by your associate dean to review program admissions that are due in two weeks. Ordinarily you would consider this request, but you have started a new research project and have committed to meeting some strict deadlines with your collaborators. In addition, you have a number of references to write for student scholarships. Taking on another task will mean you will have to work overtime next week. Considering this scenario, the 10-step ethical decision-making process listed in Table 1 encourages individuals to move through a self-reflective exercise before making a choice of action. It starts with considering the groups affected by the decision. Affected groups could include colleagues, students, and the organization, but it can also include family members and the self. As such a decision-making process is applicable to choices about self-care.

Everyone has personal biases that affect decisions. The decision-making model includes an examination of factors that influence chosen courses of action. Self-care contains a component of personal responsibility for how we react to situations presented. In order to be effective, the problem-solving approach (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 2006) recommends understanding our personal stressors and weaknesses in our problem-solving processes. Although an in-depth review of the dimensions of problem-solving is beyond the scope of this paper, research has identified different ways we think and feel about problems and how these thoughts and feelings impact our course of action. An example would be seeing the problem from a positive or negative viewpoint, similar to Gmelch's (1993) description of how the six filters influence our view of a problem.

It is possible, in many situations, that the solution is not a win-lose or lose-lose scenario. It is important to generate a number of different solutions to solve the problem, not just one. The decision-making model seeks a solution that considers how the outcome affects the relationships with others and the self both short-term and long-term. By considering the ethical principles, individuals can consider how the solution respects both others and ourselves, demonstrates caring for self and others, maintains relationships, and answers to the institution and society. The key is to defer judgement until all the options have been considered increasing the likelihood of finding a win-win solution. It takes practice, creativity, and often consultation with others to achieve this goal.

To make effective decisions, it is important to "[screen] out obviously ineffective solutions; [predict] possible consequences; [evaluate] solution outcomes; and [identify] effective solutions and [develop] a solution plan" (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 2006, pp.69-70). Part of predicting possible consequences is taking time to consider the multiple personal reward (i.e., emotional, physical, and psychological well-being), and social factors (i.e., rights of others, interpersonal relationships, and performance evaluations) of the situation. Ultimately, the person deciding on the course of action should assume responsibility for the outcome as we only have control over our own behaviour.

The final step emphasizes being proactive to avoid a similar situation in the future. This can be achieved by asking what could be put in place to put out the fire before it starts. Not all stressful situations can be avoided, but putting preemptive measures in place whenever possible can reduce the number of future stressful events or reduce the stress caused by the events.

Table 1. Steps of the Ethical Decision-making Process (Adapted from, Sinclair and Pettifor, 2001; pp. 33-34).

<i>1. Identify the individuals and groups potentially affected by the decision.</i>
<i>2. Identify ethically relevant issues and practices, including the interests, rights, and any relevant characteristics of the individuals and groups involved and of the system or circumstances in which the ethical problem arose.</i>
<i>3. Consider how personal biases, stresses, or self-interest might influence the development of or choice between courses of action.</i>
<i>4. Develop alternative courses of action.</i>
<i>5. Analyze likely short-term, ongoing, and long-term risks and benefits of each course of action on the individual(s)/group(s) involved or likely to be affected (e.g., client, client's family or employees, employing institution, students, research participants, colleagues, the discipline, society, self).</i>
<i>6. Choose a course of action after conscientious application of existing principles, values, and standards.</i>
<i>7. Action, with a commitment to assume responsibility for the consequences of the action.</i>
<i>8. Evaluate of the results of the course of action.</i>
<i>9. Assume responsibility for consequences of action, including correction of negative consequences, if any, or re-engaging in the decision-making process if the ethical issue is not resolved.</i>
<i>10. Take appropriate action, as warranted and feasible, to prevent future occurrences of the dilemma (e.g., communication and problem solving with colleagues; changes in procedures and practices).</i>

Recommendations for Institutions

As noted previously, institutions have shared responsibility for promoting self-care practices in academia. Kinman (2014) outlined several types of interventions to promote wellness in university life. First, organizational strategies include providing training on stress awareness and management, improving trust, communication, and interpersonal and personal organization. Second, staff-level interventions include recognizing excellent work, instituting policies regarding bullying, increasing morale, and instituting lifestyle and fitness training. Third, managers might benefit from training and support to gain skills necessary to manage with respect, manage workloads, manage individuals, and manage relationships effectively. Institutionally, positive leadership is a key factor in improving employee self-care as well as performance and

productivity. Two components of positive leadership can be utilized to achieve these goals. First, positive communication results in employees feeling more emotionally supported, optimistic, and using more effective problem-solving. Second, role modeling boundary setting between work and life increases employee confidence that these boundaries are acceptable behaviours in the work setting (Morganson et al., 2014). This is particularly important as academics often base their understanding of expectations on the implicit rules of others' behaviours rather than the explicit rules.

Conclusion

When academics maintain self-care, they tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and their family lives, productivity of the organization increases, and employees report higher levels of psychological well-being (Morganson et al., 2014). Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison (2016) used the analogy of the self as a pond; the pond represents our personal resources or what we have to give. Self-care is the spring that feeds the pond so that we are replenished and have energy, effort, and vitality to give to all aspect of our work. Consequently, if we stop up the spring, our pond becomes stagnant and we have nothing worth giving.

There are many steps academics can take to achieve better self-care and reduce the risk of burnout. Actions can be taken on an ongoing basis that promote well-being including being intentional about decisions and setting priorities. We can also choose to look at a situation in a more positive light by reframing our perceptions. The ethical decision-making process is one method of assessing immediate situations in order to create long-term solutions to stressors. The process includes a consideration of four ethical principles that can help guide decision making. Engaging in a self-reflective process and focusing on problem-solving may lead academics to feel more in control of their situations. Lastly, we acknowledge institutions have role to play in workplace stress. It is encouraging that a dialogue has been started within Canadian institutions about the mental health of all members of the campus community. Although changes take time, recognizing this need and developing long-term solutions will be of benefit to everyone.

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