

Advisor Wellness Tips

A Well-Being and Advisor Retention Advising Community Resource

General

1. **Explore your wellness resources:** Investigate what employee wellness programs, resources, and benefits your institution offers. Consider utilizing your institution's Employee Assistance Program. Additionally, many institutions host or contract emotional wellness workshops, physical fitness programs, discount programs for financial wellness, and more. If you're not sure where to start, begin by contacting your HR office or search keywords like "employee wellness" on your institution's website. You may also check with your supervisor. If you are an advising administrator, you are encouraged to have information readily available for your employees.
2. **Assess your self-care:** Take a few minutes to reflect on the ways you care for yourself. Do you have social and relaxation outlets? Are you taking good care of yourself physically? Are you setting and holding boundaries that align with your values? If you'd like help assessing your wellness, consider online resources [like this one](#). Then, if there's some aspect of your self-care that you want to improve, identify a way to make a realistic and immediate improvement. For example, if your boundary setting is at a 3 on a scale from 1 - 10, think about something you can do to move it up to a 4 or 5 in the near future. Read a little more about advisor self-care in these *Academic Advising Today* articles: "[The Healthy Advisor](#)" (Kem, DeBella, & Koenecke, 2007) and "[Emotional Labor and Professional Burnout: Advisor Self-Care in the Age of COVID](#)" (Maller & McGill, 2021).
3. **Refresh your workspace:** Re-energize your office or workspace by rearranging, adding new decorations, or even just tidying up. Small changes can make a workspace feel more positive and welcoming.

Emotional Wellness

4. **Save your encouragements:** Save notes of thanks and positive feedback from colleagues and students. Store these in a way that you can access them later and recognize that you, and your work, are impactful and appreciated.
5. **Share a win:** Experiencing joy and optimism is an important part of emotional well-being. Practice gratitude by thinking of a recent accomplishment or positive encounter then spread encouragement by sharing the story with a friend, family member, or colleague.
6. **Press pause:** It's okay to take a break. When you need a moment, find a positive way to press pause. This might mean stepping away from your workspace to stretch, savor a snack away from screens, or take a quick walk. Chances are, you'll be more focused and energized afterward.
7. **Try a breathing exercise:** To diffuse stress, take a few minutes to center yourself and focus on breathing. There are several guided breathing videos you can try. A great place to start is the simple Square Breathing Exercise (see instructions [here](#)).
8. **Reframe a stressor:** Brainstorm a few sources of stress in your life. See if it is possible to reframe one stress statement as a positive statement about your values. Is this the shift from saying, "I'm stressed about not getting enough time with my kids" to saying, "Being a present parent is important to me" or saying, "I'm stressed about my project" to saying, "Doing this project as well as possible is important to me." [The Awesome Human Project](#) (Kogan, 2022) has some helpful guidance on doing this.

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9. **Practice self-compassion:** If you've recently experienced a disappointment or failure, practice self-compassion. Imagine you are talking with a friend about it and consider how you would balance acknowledging it while also reassuring them that everyone has shortcomings and those can always be a learning experience. Then, turn that narrative towards yourself with compassion.
10. **Create or participate in a culture of recognition:** Does your institution offer advising awards? How about your office? If the answer is no, talk to some colleagues and administrators in your area to get a program started. If yes, take some time to nominate a co-worker or yourself. A little recognition goes a long way to prevent feeling under appreciated and becoming burned out. In addition to on-campus recognition, consider nominating yourself or a colleague for a NACADA Award either through your region or global awards.

Work/Life Wellness

11. **Negotiate flexible work arrangements:** Consider what work arrangement(s) might best support your work/life harmony. Remote work days? Flextime? Alternate hours? Gather information on flexible work arrangements in the field and envision how they might be implemented for you personally. Then, plan a time to talk with your supervisor about your ideas and options.
12. **Practice self-advocacy:** If you're experiencing workplace stress, communicate with your supervisor about your concerns and challenges. Not sure how to self-advocate? Start by reading a few short articles on the topic like "[How to advocate for yourself at work](#)" (Atlassian, 2023) and "[Ask an Expert: How Do I Advocate For Myself at Work?](#)" (Harvard Business Review, 2021).
13. **Don't lose your leave:** Time to check in with your paid time off balance. If you haven't used leave in awhile, make a plan to take some time off. This could be in large increments (like a vacation), in medium increments (like a long weekend or mental health day), or in small increments (like logging off 30 minutes early at the end of the work day).
14. **Start a work project that is meaningful to you:** Consider a work topic of interest and importance to you. Brainstorm a doable and engaging project (tip sheet, flier, presentation, article, survey) that you could do on that idea.
15. **Take your lunch break:** Make sure you schedule and take a lunch break daily. Leave your desk or office if possible. Give your brain a mental break from working.
16. **Monitor your workload and role development:** Regularly assess your workload, caseload, expanded duties, various roles, and your job description to evaluate whether your workload is appropriate, sustainable, and rewarding. Collaborate with your supervisor in these assessments to determine the best path forward for you personally, for your position, and for your unit. [This article](#) on advising workloads may be a helpful resource.

Social Wellness

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17. **Encourage a colleague:** Tell a coworker something you admire about them or enjoy about working with them.
18. **Reflect on your social media:** Consider how you might be able to adjust your social media settings and usage to maximize benefit and minimize harm. This may mean taking an occasional social media break, adjusting what you follow, or setting boundaries on when and how much you use it.
19. **Schedule time with a colleague:** Ask a colleague to go out to lunch, on a walk, for a cup of coffee, etc. Use this time to connect with your colleague, building a community for support and collaboration.

Physical Wellness

20. **Take a water break:** Do you get caught up in tasks and forget to drink water throughout your workday? Make a plan to hydrate regularly. Consider setting reminders on your calendar or using a reminder App on your phone.
21. **Desk stretches:** Take a few minutes during your workday to do some stretches at your desk. This might include rolling your neck and shoulders, stretching your arms, arching your upper back, and leaning side to side. There are online resources to guide you through some options (see an example [here](#)). Always remember to practice physical safety and consult with a physician if you need further guidance on what stretches would be best for you.
22. **Lunch Time Movement:** If your workplace has a shower, consider exercise (such as a run, walk, swim, or other movement) during your lunch break. Always remember to practice physical safety and consult with a physician if you need further guidance on what exercise would be best for you.

Resources

Looking to read more about workplace well-being? Here are a few WBAR book recommendations:

- [Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle \(and the new Burnout Workbook\) - Emily and Amelia Nagoski](#)
- [The Age of Overwhelm: Strategies for the Long Haul - Laura van Dernoot Lipsky](#)
- [Creating Sustainable Careers in Student Affairs: What Ideal Worker Norms Get Wrong and How to Make It Right - edited by Margaret W. Sallee](#)