

# Strategies for Self-care

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Each person requires a unique balance of these different strategies, depending on particular circumstances and on which areas come more naturally or pose challenges consistently.

- a. **Spiritual care** – We should engage in whatever practice gets us to the point where we feel loved by God and can pray from our most honest emotions. This is different for each person in terms of disciplines, but I think the end result is the same: to build an intimate relationship with God where we really can be honest, vulnerable, and open to love, a relationship which allows us to go through some awful situations.
- b. **Physical care** - Since we are embodied spirits, we each have our way of doing this. I like aerobic exercise and weight training to relieve stress and build resilience for hard times.
- c. **Mental care** - To prepare for a crisis, I read and stay informed as best I can but with a theological twist.
- d. **Emotional care** - Having a counselor, a spiritual director, and a confessor helps. I use the basic emotions of happy, sad, angry, or afraid to check in to see how I am feeling and to communicate to those close to me where I am emotionally and what I need from them at this time. I find that leaders need to do this so that subordinates don't obsess over why the boss is feeling bad and if they are responsible for the mood or to fix it. Organizationally, too much energy gets expended on leaders who don't check in with themselves and their people.
- e. **Ratio** - Couples research has shown that healthy couples have 5 times more positive interactions than negative. If this ratio dips, they drift into negative sentiment override and interpret even good things in their relationship negatively. By analogy, a pastor's relationship to life benefits when the pastor tries to build up lots of good encounters with life for every negative. Bottom line is that fun is very serious business to counter burn out.
- f. **Systemic wellness** - Having good boundaries that are not rigid or diffused between sub-groups in the parish help with communication, lessens frustration, and prevents boundary violations in clergy attempts for validation or inappropriate emotional support from parishioners.